Random

In a random sample, every member of the population has the same probability of being included in the sample. Although a purely random sample is often difficult to achieve, it can produce fair and unbiased results.

To avoid problems in having to collect data from populations that are geographically scattered, populations can be divided into clusters. A cluster or region is then chosen at random and then often individuals are chosen at random from that cluster. This can be a powerful sampling method since many businesses operate in multiple geographic areas. However, the cluster being sampled could have different or unique characteristics.

Stratified

Stratified sampling involves dividing up the population into different sub-groups (e.g., male and female, age groups, ethnicity) and then choosing individuals from those sub-groups at random.

This is different from cluster sampling in that you are initially dividing up the population into groups that are as different as possible whereas in cluster sampling you are initially dividing up the population into groups that are as similar as possible.

Stratified sampling can ensure a more proportionate or representative sample. For example, this method could help make sure the appropriate number of responses from both males and females are gathered. Although this method can be difficult to organize, it can increase the accuracy of the results.

Cluster

Quota sampling does not choose individuals at random. Instead, a designated number of individuals from a specific sub-group (i.e., quota) are chosen. This could be the first 100 people walking down the street or the first 50 men and first 50 women responding to an online survey. Since individuals are not chosen at random using this method, results should always be viewed with suspicion

Quota

When you do not have access to a sufficient number of people with the characteristics you are looking for, then the snowballing method can be used. This method involves requesting referrals from the initial respondents so that you can reach the desired number of responses. This can be used in conjunction with quota sampling to reach a desired quota. As you can imagine, the bias involved in this process would need to be addressed when analyzing the resulting data from using the snowballing method of sampling.

Snowballing

Convenience sampling is a popular method for businesses (and IB students) facing time and cost constraints. Rather than selecting people at random, individuals are selected based on their availability. Of all of the sampling methods covered, convenience sampling can lead to the most inaccurate and biased results. Therefore, it is advised to follow the general guideline, and collect as many responses as possible.

Convenience